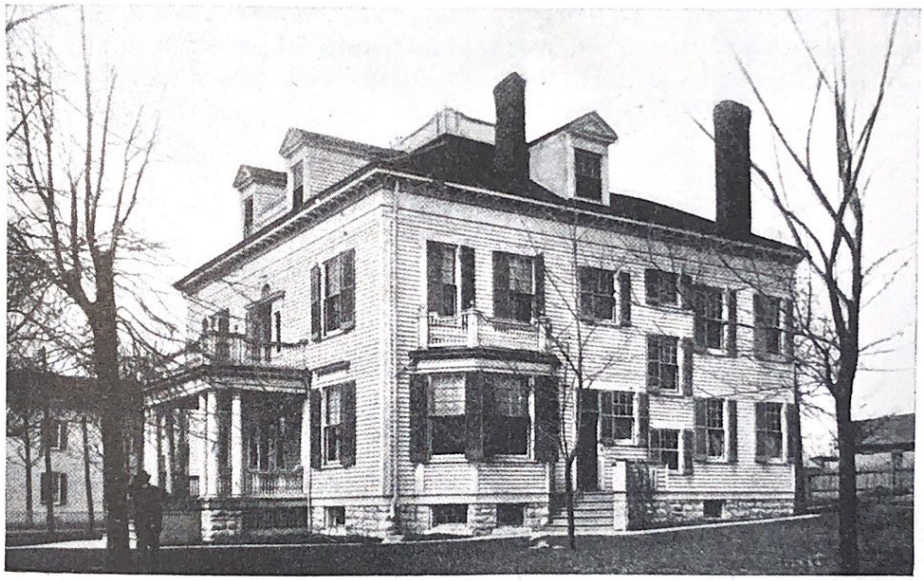
CHAPTER LIX

PERRY COUNTY

PIONEER SETTLERS AND INCIDENTS—PINCKNEYVILLE SELECTED AS COUNTY SEAT—FIRST CIRCUIT COURT—DUQUOIN AND TAMAROA

Perry county was made from Randolph and Jackson on January 29, 1827. The county is almost rectangular and contains 451 square miles, with a population of 22,088. It is an agricultural and mining county. It has 21 coal mines and an output of 1,446,077 tons. It is comparatively



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level, sloping southward. It has no streams of any size. Beaucoup creek is the largest stream. It flows south through the county, near the center.

PIONEER SETTLERS AND INCIDENTS

The first settler was John Flack, who settled on Four Mile Prairie in 1799. About the same time a settler by the name of Cox came, but did not remain long. Four Mile Prairie is south and a little west of Pinckneyville some four or five miles. B. A. Brown and family soon came to be neighbors of Flack. The next settlers were the Hutchings,

John and William, who settled some eight miles north of Pinckneyville. There were eighteen people in the two families, including three or four slaves. It is said the Hutchings people gathered wild honey and hunted deer, and traded beeswax, honey and deer skins in Kaskaskia and St. Louis for things to live upon. John Huggins settled at Cutler in 1802, and Jarrold Jackson near DuQuoin about 1803. Jackson built a sort of bridge across Little Muddy and kept a sort of toll gate and made money. Hiram Root and Ephraim Skinner came to this locality about 1816.

By 1826 there were many families scattered in groups about over the county and steps were taken to get it cut off into a county, which was done in 1827. These early comers were from all sections of the older states. They all entered heartily into the hardships of pioneer life, making their own furniture, tanning their leather, constructing their harness, spinning and weaving their own clothing, etc. House raisings, log rollings, and corn huskings were common. The pastimes were jumping, wrestling, and running foot races. The shooting match was an interesting procedure. It was on this wise. A lady would raise a dozen turkeys. A day would be appointed and the marksmen would bring their guns. Ten men would put up 10 cents each for one shot each in a contest for the turkey. The best marksman would get the turkey. The rifles were long, very heavy, and of small bore. Many of these pioneers could shoot the eye of a squirrel in the top of the tallest trees. Shot guns were seldom seen. These conditions prevailed throughout all Southern Illinois.

Pinckneyville Selected as County Seat

When Perry county was created the county commissioners were Edwin Humphreys, Samuel Crawford, of Randolph, and Singleton Kimmel of Jackson county. They were to meet in the house of Amos Anderson to make selection of a permanent seat of justice for the county. When it should be selected the act provided it should be called Pinckneyville. The commissioners met in Mr. Amos Anderson's house, which was situated on Panther creek, three and a half miles east of Pinckneyville, on what is now the DuQuoin and Pinckneyville wagon road. The commissioners selected the present site of Pinckneyville as the county seat. The town was laid off and lots placed on sale with a minimum price of $5.00. They were auctioned off and twenty-four lots brought $1,223.28, an average of $50.97 per lot.

The first bridge built by the county commissioners was erected across Beaucoup creek just east of Pinckneyville. It was sixteen feet wide and built of the strongest timbers, some of them being 12 by 15 inches. At the time the lots in Pinckneyville were sold, a contract was let to build a court house. It was "to be built of hewn logs which are to face from ten to twelve inches in the middle; and to be eighteen by twenty-two feet in length. The lower floor of said court house to be laid with good puncheons with good hewn joists, but no floor above, etc." The contract price was $54. This log house was weatherboarded in 1829 with four-foot boards, neatly shaved.

The second court house was of brick, forty-three feet square, two stories high, at a cost of $1,765 for the brick work and $840.87 for the wood work, plaster, etc. This was built about 1837. A third court house was built in 1850, and a fourth one was finished in 1878.

First Circuit Court

The first circuit court was held in the house of Amos Anderson on Holt's Prairie, August 28, 1827. The Hon. Theophilus W. Smith, a justice of the supreme court, presided. David J. Baker was appointed prosecuting attorney. Among the able lawyers and judges who came to the Perry county courts were Judge Thomas C. Brown of the supreme court, Judge Walter B. Scates, Judge James Semple, Hon. William H. Underwood, Judge Sidney Breese, Hon. Alexander M. Jenkins, Hon. John K. Mulkey, Hon. William H. Green, and scores of others.

The first newspaper printed in Perry county was the *Perry County Times*. It was first issued October 1, 1856. William McEwing was editor and proprietor.

DuQuoin and Tamaroa

There are besides Pinckneyville, the county seat, DuQuoin and Tamaroa, which are towns of some importance. Tamaroa is a town situated on the Illinois Central, nine miles north of DuQuoin. It is a very old settled region, the earliest settlers dating back to 1815. When the Illinois Central went through in 1854 the town was located and grew rapidly. It has a number of good business firms, good schools, several small industries, and good churches. Its population is 910.

DuQuoin is a city of 5,454. It is a very prosperous city. Its mines distribute large amounts of money in the monthly pay roll. It has large flour mills, and the Eldorado branch of the Illinois Central brings a very large amount of railroad business from the east in trading, passenger traffic, freight, etc. There are ten coal mines in and about DuQuoin. There are eleven other mines in the county. The vicinity about DuQuoin was settled as early as 1816 by Hiram Root and Ephraim Skinner, two names that have come down to the present day. Old DuQuoin was originally laid out about 1844. The old town was about three miles southeast of the present DuQuoin. It had a good start, with dwellings, stores, shops, churches and a seminary of learning.

In 1854, when the Illinois Central came and the new DuQuoin was laid out and began to grow, the old town begun to decay. DuQuoin is well supplied with churches and schools. The township high school enrolls about 200 pupils and is tactfully managed to C. W. Houk, the principal.

A HISTORY

OF

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

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BY

George Washington Smith, M. A.

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